

A
L E T T E R

TO

THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF SELKIRK,

IN ANSWER TO A PAMPHLET ENTITLED

**"A POSTSCRIPT TO THE STATEMENT RESPECTING THE EARL OF
SELKIRK'S SETTLEMENT ON THE RED RIVER IN NORTH-
AMERICA."**



SANDWICH, SEPTEMBER, 1818.

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A LETTER.

MY LORD,

Having on a former occasion condescended to *solicit* the honor of a correspondence with me with so much earnestness and thro' the agency of such a variety of "honorable men," I am emboldened to think that your Lordship cannot but be pleased at this spontaneous and unceremonious advance on my part—yet, while I feel sure of a welcome from your Lordship, your goodness of heart will, nevertheless, induce you to make some allowance for the trepidation I must feel in addressing, for the first time, without a *dictator*, a *monitor*, or an *amanuensis*—a peer of the Realm—a tounier of colonies—and the commander in chief of the De Meuron troop on the Red River!

My ambition to make myself agreeable to your Lordship, would lead me to copy, as far as possible, that amenity of style which renders all your writings, especially your late pamphlets, so attractive. But, I am a man naturally rough, and as little like your Lordship as the rugged surface of my native country is like your Lordship's Baratarian Kingdom in the West. I fear, therefore, that this my first essay, unadorned as it is by that peculiar talent for fiction and invention, which gives such glowing fullness to the productions of your Lordship's pen, may offer few inducements to your Lordship to solicit a continuance of my correspondence.

I am the more anxious on this point, because the *matter* which is the subject of this letter, came to my knowledge but a few days since, and because the *occasion* of that and this, allows no time to study pretty tropes, or polish periods. The *matter* I allude to is a certain pamphlet, entitled "*A Postscript to the statement respecting the Earl of Selkirk's settlement upon the Red River, in Nov. h. America.*"

The thing, your Lordship knows, if by chance it may have fallen under your inspection, is, in itself, not worthy your atten-

tion—but the time, the place, and manner of its appearance, being just before the session of the court at Sandwich, when and where, as is surmised, your Lordship may be something interested, give it a *temporary* importance, of which your Lordship may not be aware.

Far be it from me, my Lord, to insinuate even a doubt, that your Lordship might have had a *hand* in getting up this thing just at this time and place, or even to surmise the object it was intended to effect. But you know, my Lord, that busy heads will *think*, and idle tongues will *prate*—and all the world have not been laid under the same *controlling obligations*, to think and speak well of your Lordship's purity of intention, which your Lordship's goodness once *imposed* on me. But what should your Lordship care, at this time of day, for the *thoughts* of all the world? You, who have established your character for administering equal and impartial *justice* to all?—You, my Lord, may safely wrap yourself up in the mantle of your own integrity, and content yourself with "*Hon soit qui mal y pense*," to all the *suggestions* of your enemies. But my anxiety for your Lordship's reputation, makes me forget that I have but a few hours to bestow upon the "Postscript," to recall which to your Lordship's attention was the object of my present writing. Tho' a censorious world may think, and say too, that that production bears the impression of your Lordship's genius, yet I am bound to think that your amanuensis has for once taken it in his head to play his principal.

As I have not time to make extracts, I must beg your Lordship will take the "Postscript," and turn it over page by page with me, and "mark," as we we progress, "how a plain tale shall put down your Lordship——'s amanuensis."

At the bottom of page 196, it is asserted that I was confined for contempt in a room

used as a prison by the North-West Company, that had recently been occupied by John Bourke—and that *therefore* I had no reason to complain.—Your Lordship well knows that this “room” was a dungeon, that had no windows, and no light, but what came through the chinks. Your Lordship also knows, that Bourke was a dirty blackguard. And will your Lordship say that a place where *he* might be confined, was fitting for a gentleman, a partner of the North West Company, and one whose correspondence your Lordship so *urgently* solicited?

The whole of the 2d paragraph on page 197 and all the next, as far as the notice of the letter I *addressed* to Lord Selkirk, is a tissue of lies—every assertion, sentence and paragraph, is a lie direct, a lie circumstantial, or a lie by implication. And if your Lordship require more than my simple asseveration in proof of it, and will take the trouble to turn to the 70th page of “A Narrative,” &c. you will see it proved by my deposition under oath, taken at Notawasaga, immediately after I was released from your Lordship’s kind restraint. And should your Lordship still be unbelieving, it shall be proved by the oaths of many men, with whose veracity your Lordship’s is no more to be compared “than I to Hercules.”

On page 199, my Lord, you will find the commencement of that correspondence which you condescended to invite me to open with your Lordship. Before I request your Lordship’s attention to the *facts* contained in this document which your Lordship seems to prize so highly, it may be necessary to apprise you of the circumstances which induced me to put my name to this important paper.

You may recollect, my Lord, that about the 13th of August, 1816, I was kindly constrained to become a guest in the “Room” at Fort William:—where I was sumptuously attended by your Lordship’s gentlemen in *fivery* and gentlemen in waiting. By them (no doubt for my health’s sake) I was supplied very sparingly with the “staff of life”—but abundantly with that “which maketh glad the heart of man.” But, my Lord, even at this distance of time and place, I feel that this subject is unfit for badinage.—

You will excuse me, therefore, while I set forth a “plain unvarnished tale,” even should it ruffle the usual serenity of your Lordship’s brow.

When Mr. McGillivray and the other gentlemen, taken prisoners by your Lordship, were sent to Montreal, I entreated your Lordship thrice to send me with them. You thrice refused me, and the last time I presented myself at your Lordship’s door, I was seized by the collar and thrust away by your Lordship’s sergeant. Shortly after, in consequence of my answers to some of your Lordship’s queries, which were so unfortunate as not to meet your Lordship’s approbation, I was committed to the dungeon, where I found four others, and among them my negro servant. Here I was visited alternately by Miles McDonell, Dr. Allen, Capt. D’Orsonneau, Pritchard, Spencer, and M’Pherson. They unremittently urged upon me that your Lordship’s interest was too powerful to be resisted—that you would be supplied with troops by Earl Bathurst to accomplish your designs; and they warmly recommended to me, as I valued my interest or my life, to place myself under your Lordship’s protection—that the North-west Company were entirely ruined—that it was madness for me to sacrifice myself for them,—and that, as your Lordship had observed, “*a spark of fire would easily destroy Fort William and its contents.*” On the third day I was brought again before your Lordship for examination, when your Lordship instructed me that if I would disclose under oath, all the proceedings of the North-West Company, and especially those of Mr. McGillivray, against yourself, nothing criminal should be brought against me. On being sworn, I told your Lordship plainly that I knew of no proceeding of Mr. McGillivray, or any other partner of the North-West Company against your Lordship, which would in the smallest degree criminate them. I was again remanded to the dungeon, and again attended by your Lordship’s “Familiars.”

It was then that Miles McDonell brought your Lordship’s *pressing invitation*, in your *own hand writing*, that I should address a letter to yourself, which should criminate the Company, and especially Mr. McGillivray.

And when I spoke of him as a worthy, upright man, M'Donell said, your Lordship would hear nothing said in favor of M'Gillivray—"THAT YOU WOULD HAVE HIM HUNG IF IT COST YOU YOUR FORTUNE!" Miles M'Donell, also, alluding to the De Meuron soldiery, whose bayonets then glimmered through the crannies of my dungeon, expatiated on the advantages your Lordship possessed, in having them instead of Canadians, because they would rob and massacre on the slightest intimation. Capt D'Orsonnens also took much interest in telling anecdotes within my hearing, of the cruelty and ferocity of the De Meuron Regiment, while in Germany—saying that they wanted but their "leashes slipped" to massacre and plunder all within their reach. Miles M'Donell, in answer to my enquiries, told me that he thought, in case of my compliance with your Lordship's wishes, I should be set at liberty.

It was under these circumstances—shut up in a dungeon—separated from my family—"My friends and counsellors removed far from me"—surrounded by a banditti, hardened in iniquity, the quondam tenants of European goals—kept on short allowance—stimulated by your Lordship's cordials—goaded by your Lordship's imps—till, weakened in body, harrassed and depressed in spirit, I was driven to a state of mental alienation. It was under these circumstances, my Lord, that I did consent to sign any paper your Lordship should please to send;—knowing that while thus held "in durance vile," no act I might lend my name to could be legal.—It was under these circumstances that I signed the letter to which I am about to invite your Lordship's attention. The letter was written mostly by Miles M'Donell, and the parts I copied were afterwards erased and interlined by him.

You well know, my Lord, that the first use I made of my liberty was to draw and sign a protest,* before a notary, against all the acts to which I had consented, or writings I had signed while held in durance by your Lordship; and to make a deposition, (see page 70 of "A Narrative," &c.) contra-

* See the Protest at the end of this Letter.

dicting all the material statements in the letter addressed to your Lordship and signed with my name. This is the deposition referred to above—but lest it should not be at hand, if your Lordship pleases, I will travel through the letter in the "Postscript," and tell you plainly what parts are true and what are false. And here, my lord, as you could have no *hand* in writing this letter, nor interest in its contents, I shall take the liberty of using very plain and simple language.

In the 3d paragraph of the letter, on the 199th page of the "Postscript," it is stated that I heard Mr. M'Gillivray say, "that the Colony ought to be disorganised on a more general scale"—this is false. In the next paragraph it is stated, "that Mr. M'Gillivray ordered a considerable present of provisions and liquor to be given to the people from the Red River"—the words are true, and the lie is only by implication... 'tis true the "present" was given; but it was an annual present, a "Regal," always expected by the Indians, and was peculiarly appropriate at that time, when the United States were victorious on Lake Erie.

In the next paragraph, it is stated, that a present of 60 pounds or upwards, was sent to Mrs. M'Lean, and that I objected to it. The present was sent—not by Mr. M'Donell, as stated, but by Mr. M'Leod, who was a relation of Mrs. M'Lean. I *did* object that presents should be sent to individuals at the company's expense. But the present was paid for by Mr. M'Leod, and then my objection was withdrawn.

In the second paragraph, page 200, it is stated, that "In April, 1814, I received a letter from Dougall Cameron, dated Forks of Red River, in which he said he had orders to destroy the colony." This is false.

The *seven or eight* habillements, said (in the next paragraph) to be given to the half-breeds from Red River by Duncan Cameron and Alexander M'Donell, were but *two*, and these given as wages for working the canoes.

In the 1st paragraph, on page 201, "Defond, one of the Hudson's Bay Company, is said to have been taken by the half-breeds and confined, and not released till he had put his name to a paper binding himself never to come there again." Defond had

stabbed one of the half-breeds: for this they seized him and made him promise, in order to escape punishment, never to come among them again. Did your lordship never incarcerate an innocent man, and, by threatening his life, compel him to sign any paper your lordship pleased? And did your lordship ever read of "motes" and "beams?"

The third paragraph on page 201, respecting Mr. Thain, is a lie direct. The next paragraph, p. 282, is true. The assertions in the second paragraph on page 202, as far as relates to the statement of the contents of a letter from A. N. McLeod, is false.

As to the transactions mentioned in the next paragraph on the same page, Mr. M'Gillivray was entirely ignorant of them—neither did I hear him say the words there attributed to him. But I did hear him say that he would not open the letters, and that he would have nothing to do with them.

In the beginning of the first paragraph of page 203, it is stated, that when I was about to set out from Fort William for the Red River, "Mr. M'Gillivray told me to bring as many Indians along with me as I could." This, my lord, is false. Mr. M'Gillivray was much opposed to my going to the Red River at all. But I wished to see my son—and when I had determined to go, he said, "for God's sake, then, let there be no bloodshed"—"Let them keep the packs, only endeavor to bring away the provisions." After proceeding as related in the remainder of this paragraph, and arriving at the Red River, I was met by the half-breeds, with my son at their head. They asked me if they had done right—I told them they had done right in defending themselves. I here learnt that my brother-in-law was killed at the affair of the 19th June, before the half-breeds had fired a gun.

The statement in the second paragraph of the same page, respecting a North-West Company Clerk's opening a letter—my hindering him, and enclosing it to Mr. M'Gillivray—is false.

It is true, that there was an order for goods and equipments for the half-breeds, as stated in the first paragraph on p. 204, but they were sent to them in the same manner, and for the same purpose as to all the Indians; i. e. to trade with, and for their services—and it is well known that goods were sent to them for the same purposes

long before a colony existed on the river.—In the next paragraph there is a repetition of an assertion respecting Mr. M'Gillivray and myself which I have already contradicted.

The last paragraph, on page 204, is wholly false—Mr. M'Gillivray knew nothing of the men there mentioned. The last entire paragraph, on p. 205, of this singular production of your Lordship—'s amanuensis, is wholly false in every sentence.

My Lord, we have done with the *letter*—Let us now proceed with the "Postscript." I am sorry that in addressing your Lordship, I should so often feel myself obliged to stain my paper with certain ungentlemanly monosyllables. But were I to study new and genteel circumlocutions to enunciate the detection of such repeated falsehoods, I fear I should swell this letter beyond your Lordship's patience to peruse.—And why, when your Lordship is once familiar with a *thing*, should you quarrel with its *name*?

Permit me, therefore, my Lord, to pursue my own blunt way.

The remaining part of the 'Postscript,' from page 205 to page 211, is false.—It is false, that "the above letter was considered as a continuation of my examination under oath," as stated in page 105. I told Miles M'Donell, after signing the above paper, that I never would affirm under oath.—He then said to me, that your lordship did not wish I should—"that you only wished it for the purpose of destroying the character of Mr. M'Gillivray.

It is false "that your lordship urged me to go to Montreal as a witness."—It is false "that I expressed a desire to go into the interior instead of going to Montreal," as stated in page 206. So far from that, your lordship knows that I expressed repeatedly my desire to go immediately to Montreal and give an account of my services. And when both your lordship and the 'scapegallows, Pritchard, advised me to go to the United States to escape imprisonment, I constantly refused to go any where but to Montreal.

It is false, that "Mr. M'Kenzie expressed his inclination to sell the whole of the Company's property at Fort William," as stated in page 207. I constantly declared to Miles M'Donell, and other 'Familiars' of your lordship, that I was but a wintering partner, and had no right to sell, and would not sell any thing belonging to the Company. This falsehood is again repeated in page 208, where it is said 'Mr. M'Kinzie proposed a sale of all the property,' &c.

The whole matter related on page 210, is false. The truth is this. On my way to Montreal, I met Mr. M'Donell, who had been liberated on bail, and was returning; he was accompanied by

Mr. Smith the sheriff, a clerk, and the canoe-men. There were no "150 Iroquois in arms,"—there were no "threats of taking Fort William," or of "bringing down his lordship in irons," nor was "Mr. M'Kenzie taken from his canoe by them." I requested Mr. M'Donell to take me back to Drummond's Island, to make my deposition; he declined, and wished me to proceed and have the deposition taken at York. But Mr. Smith refused to go further, unless I did go back and have the deposition taken at Drummond's Island, as he supposed I knew all the facts, &c. Mr. M'Donell then consented to take me back with him.

I will detain your lordship's attention no longer on the "Postscript," than to request you to turn a moment to Pritchard's deposition, page 219. This document *seems* intended as a kind of summary or abstract of all the falsehoods scattered through the 'Letter,' and other parts of the 'postscript,' and also to answer the purpose of bolstering them by the formality of a deposition.

Does your lordship know this Pritchard? And knowing him, would you, where his interest differed from your own, trust a shilling to the veracity of his deposition? This deposition-maker, my lord, is only worthy of notice, like other vicious animals, for whom their keepers are responsible. It may be well for your lordship's interest to know what this creature has been, in order to regulate your conduct with him hereafter. This same Pritchard, my lord, was once in the employ of the North-West Company, and had charge under them of Braden House on the Red River, and had about 30 men under him. There were in the fort 700 bags of Pemican, 90 kegs of grease, and 10 or 12 bags of dried meat. Miles M'Donell sent a sheriff and 4 men to take the provisions: and this traitor to his employers passively allowed them to cut down the pickets of the fort—gave up the provisions of the Company. and, when the men would endeavor to secure their employers' property, locked up their muskets—saying at the same time, "thank God, the North-West Company are now ruined here; they can send out none of their returns this season." Perhaps your lordship's Sancho-Panza Governor can better explain the commencement, cause and progress of Pritchard's treachery, than myself. His life and manners your lordship must be acquainted with, and should you hereafter suffer by his treachery, you can only blame yourself.

My lord, I have done with the "Postscript," with your "Familiars," and the deposition-maker—and must now beg one moment's confer-

ence with yourself.—You will recollect that when I was about to leave Fort William for Montreal, I repeatedly entreated your lordship's leave to take my wife and children with me.—You constantly refused, assuring me that you would take care of her. Not trusting entirely to your lordship's remembrance, I left for her a large supply of necessary family provisions, not an article of which were ever delivered to her.—Nor did your lordship ever furnish any.—She and her three children were put in a soldier's house without the fort, with no other protection than her watch dog. Even that faithful guardian your lordship requested of her, to send to lac la Pluie. This she refused. She was then told she must leave the house and live with the soldiers. This also she declined. A file of soldiers were then sent to turn her and her children out of doors. Indignant at such treatment, she armed herself with pistols, and met them at her door—-and even your favorite De Meurons, more cowardly or more humane than your lordship, for once disobeyed their orders. Such, my lord, was the protection you afforded to a defenceless woman whom you professed to take under your care. Did your lordship hope by this treatment to induce me to return within the sphere of your friendly custody? Or did you hope by these winning arguments to gain me, through her influence, over to your lordship's interest?—Or * * * * * My lord, you also are a husband & a father; and in some moment of calm reflection, should you ever find such, the remembrance of these facts shall plant more thorns in your bosom than any words I choose to utter.

But I fear, my Lord, that I may distract your attention too much from more important affairs. The assizes are at hand—interests of high concern are pressing on you. "Each moment has its sickle"—Each must be deliberately wielded—and none more than your Lordship is sensible that "there is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the ebb, leads on to fortune."—The time and circumstances of the publication of the "Postscript" evinces that this sentiment has not been disregarded. If the testimony of a witness, for example should be feared, what will so effectually relieve that fear, as to blast the reputation of the witness by a publication, or a "Postscript" to a publication, suppressed until the moment when a refutation of its falsehood would come too late? What would be more ingenious than this, on the eve of an investigation into some of your Lordship's "fantastic tricks?" Far should it be from me, my Lord, at such a crisis, to add to the various matters pressing on your Lordship's mind, did I not know the capa-

ly and versatility of that mind to embrace & adapt itself to any thing and all things, from the cares of empires to the inventory of a bill of sale—Whether the subject of consideration be the affairs of the nations in the old world, or the adjustment of the fiscal concerns of your kingdom in the new—whether it bring you in contact with some wily Falleyrand, or tempt you to extort from a lonely and an unprotected woman the secret counsels of her lord:—whether seated with honored Peers in the house of Parliament, it call upon you to explore the occult sources of a nation's greatness, or in some *smaller house*, within the purlieus of Fort William, to scent out a discarded letter of advice, or account current of old pettries:—Still, my Lord, I find you always at home—always equal to the exigency—always capable of grasping the whole matter at your ease.

But I have intruded longer than I intended on your Lordship's time—and besides, I wish to keep some things in store, in case your Lordship should again *constrain* me to address you. For, tho' you, my Lord, dictator to an immense extent of wilderness, entrenched with titles, and

backed by powerful support, may feel secure; yet you may do well to recollect, that "Pigmies are pigmies still, tho' perched on alps"—and that Achilles' self was vulnerable in the heel. You may congratulate yourself, my Lord, on having, as you suppose, ruined the peace and reputation of a man, whose only offence against your Lordship, was his resistance to illegal and oppressive acts, and that you have effectually destroyed his power of doing harm. But in this your Lordship may chauce to be mistaken. For, be assured, my Lord, however rapid may be your march to fame and immortality, that, while you still pursue the course you have pursued, and he retains his present sense of injury, you shall not advance a single step without your portrait by your side.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient,
and most humble servant,

D. M'KENZIE.

To the Right Honorable, }
the EARL OF SELKIRK. }

EXPLANATION.—Relative to the "Regale," spoken of in the 5th page, it is proper to observe, that the giving of such presents was no uncommon occurrence—on the contrary, a *regale* is always expected by the men on arriving at Fort William from their wintering grounds, and on every other occasion which occurs for assembling and addressing them as a body. Such presents also are given to Indians when they visit the Fort, and surely there was occasion to address the men, and to explain to them the importance of preserving the provisions in the interior country, when it was known that the victory of the United States on Lake Erie had cut off all supplies from Canada.

PROTEST.

I, DANIEL M'KENZIE, Esquire, a retired partner of the firm of the North-West Company, having been detained a prisoner at Fort William by Lord Selkirk's orders, from the 13th of August to the 11th day of October, 1816, during all which time I was in a state of *incomplete* actual derangement of mind, did by the persuasion of Lord Selkirk and his agents, sign certain papers and instruments of writing, purporting to be a sale of goods, packs of furs, vessel on the stocks, an indenture of agreement to leave to arbitration certain disputes and differences between his Lordship and the North-West Company, and a letter to the interior, stating that the North-West Company were ruined, &c. &c. all which papers were dictated by his Lordship and his agents. Therefore, from the causes above, the dread of a long imprisonment, and in hopes of obtaining my liberty, I did sign the said papers, altho' unauthorised so to do.

Therefore, I do by these presents, now that I have my liberty, solemnly protest against all acts done by me as aforesaid, during the period above stated. In witness whereof I have signed and sealed these presents, at Drummond's Island, this 11th day of November, A. D. 1816.

DANIEL M'KENZIE.

Signed and sealed in presence of J. GRANT, Notary }
Public, D. MITCHELL, J. P. Western District. }
WM. SMITH.